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Sen. Joan Hartley
Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

HB 5378 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MAXIMUM SURCHARGE FOR ENHANCED 9-1-1 SERVICE

Good morning. First, I would like to thank everyone who has played a part in getting us to this moment in time. Each individual who has had a role in the vision, the planning, and the implementation of each stage of the 9-1-1 emergency telephone system can take some satisfaction in knowing that the State of Connecticut has up until now kept abreast of or ahead of the nation. It is because of those same people that we find ourselves on the eve of what I would call the most sweeping improvement in the emergency reporting system since its inception.

Many concurrent activities are now converging in such a way that Connecticut is poised to take full advantage of them all, and to end up with a 9-1-1 system, or emergency reporting system that will provide its citizens with access to public safety response in a manner that the new technology age has caused them to expect. We have heard much of what I am referring to in the news already. People (and I am not talking just teenagers) have adopted texting as their primary method of communication. While the jury is still out on the effectiveness of texting the way that it currently works, the expectation from the news accounts still seems to be that people should be able to text to 9-1-1. Today, that is not possible. People can take pictures and videos, which leads some people to think that being able to send pictures or video of emergency scenes to the 9-1-1 dispatch center so that they could then be forwarded to the responding public safety units would be a great idea. Today, that is not possible.

As a result of the large scale disasters in recent memory, discussions occurred about linking emergency centers so that they could take over for each other. With the older technology, this would have been cumbersome. With technological improvements it is now much easier. It does require that the connections between those centers and the systems that they are running be compatible. This has led to the development of standards so that as these centers are built they will utilize the same or similar technology.

Connecticut has been fortunate in many ways. We developed our 9-1-1 system on a statewide basis. Many other localities do it by county or other geopolitical divisions that reduce their cost effectiveness. Our method allows us to plan in a very efficient manner. Our current system was great for its time. It was well thought out and maintained. Its "rate of success" was very near the 100% mark. However, it's time has passed. The building blocks of the hardware portion of the system are no longer being manufactured. Its software is no longer supported. We need to progress to what is being hailed as the Next Generation of 9-1-1.

In keeping with the theme of staying ahead of our time, people (some retired, some still here) worked on laying the groundwork for the advent of this Next Generation 9-1-1. One of the fundamental requirements is the installation of an IP-based network over which this communication traffic will ride. A few years ago the planning was initiated, the funding put in place, to the point where we now have a very capable fiber network called the Connecticut Public Safety Services Data Network (CPSSDN), or the Public Safety Data Network (PSDN). This is installed and will be working soon, at which time it will provide service to its "customers" in the Public Safety community.

We recently issued a Request for Proposals for a new 9-1-1 or emergency call reporting system. We have received a number of submissions which have been evaluated and scored, and which are being reviewed by our consultant as we speak. The expectation is that we will make an award shortly to one of the vendors, which will then start the process of negotiating a contract.

So, the convergence I mentioned earlier is occurring- the standards for Next Generation are nearly complete so that we know what to buy and what to build. The network is in place for robust and reliable connectivity to the PSAP's (Public Safety Answering Points, or 9-1-1 centers). We are about to try to buy a new 9-1-1 or emergency reporting system. The problem is that we can not afford to purchase it with the surcharge cap at its present level. While we will not know the exact amount that we need to charge until the contract negotiation is complete for the new system, we know based on preliminary information that it is likely to come in somewhere between \$0.76 and \$0.99. The surcharge will only be set at the amount needed to purchase and run the system. It gets set after we know the budget. There will not be any "extra" funds sitting somewhere unspent. We need your concurrence on this. Without your help, we can not afford to provide the citizens of the State of Connecticut the 9-1-1 emergency reporting system they deserve. I urge you to vote to increase the surcharge cap to \$0.99.

Jeffrey Vannais

PSAP Representative

Connecticut Enhanced 9-1-1 Commission